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Plans to Convert 110' Patrol Boats Scaled Back

Citing concerns over the deteriorating hull conditions in the inventory of 110-foot Island Class patrol boats, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Thomas H. Collins recently announced that the design and development of the Deepwater Program's Maritime Patrol Coastal Cutter (WPC, formerly the Fast Response Cutter) would be accelerated. As a result, it is unlikely that all 49 of the Coast Guard's 15-year-old 110s will be converted to a more capable 123-foot cutter, and the conversion effort is expected to be scaled back considerably.

"Our 110-foot cutters are well beyond their planned service lives and have experienced 20 hull breaches, resulting in emergency dry docks," Collins noted in his "State of the Coast Guard" address in March. "Our greatest threat to mission performance continues to be that our aircraft, boats, and cutters are aging, technologically obsolete, and require replacement of modernization."

The Commandant's decision to accelerate the design of the Coastal Cutter reflects the harsh realities associated with continuing deterioration and soaring support costs for nearly all of the Coast Guard's aging legacy assets. As more funds are reallocated from Deepwater recapitalization programs to sustain legacy platforms, the design, development, and delivery of new assets are unavoidably delayed.

The decision to accelerate the design and development of the Deepwater Program's WPC makes it unlikely that all 49 110' Patrol Boats will undergo the same conversion as the CGC Matagorda (above) US Coast Guard Photo

Deepwater's conversion of Island-class 110-foot cutters was never intended to extend their service life to 30 years, but was seen as a cost-effective way to bridge the gap until the time that new WPCs entered service during the next decade.

"The 110s were ridden hard, and in our post-9/11 operational environment accelerating their replacement is the most responsive approach to meet the Coast Guard's pressing need for improved capabilities and greater operational capacity," said Rear Adm. Patrick M. Stillman, Deepwater's program executive officer. "The Deepwater Program has the flexibility to adjust to emerging circumstances."

Eight 110s are now under contract for conversion by Bollinger Shipyards, and plans to convert more in the near term are being reviewed. The decision not to convert all 49 hulls as originally planned stems, in part, from the significant deterioration the boats have experienced during their years of service in a harsh operating environment.

To date, the Coast Guard has accepted three of the modernized 123s from Bollinger—the cutters Matagorda, Metompkin, and Pa-

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WMSL Contract Awarded, WMSM to be Accelerated

Integrated Coast Guard Systems, the joint venture of Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin, has been awarded a contract to begin production and delivery work on the first Maritime Security Cutter, Large (WMSL, formerly the National Security Cutter), the new and highly capable high-endurance cutter, under the Deepwater program.

This contract, valued at $140 million, brings the effort to design and build the lead ship of the most advanced cutter class in the U.S. Coast Guard's fleet one step closer to delivery.

"The contract award for the Maritime Security Cutter, Large is a significant milestone in the Deepwater Program," said Rear Adm. Patrick M. Stillman, program executive officer for the Integrated Deepwater System. "It begins the process that will, in several years, culminate in the delivery of the Coast Guard's first 21st-century cutter--a highly capable ship designed to satisfy the Coast Guard's multi-mission responsibilities in homeland security, national defense, marine safety, and environmental protection.

In addition to enabling the Coast Guard to fulfill its commitment to the National Fleet Policy, this class of cutters will play an important role in restoring the Coast Guard's operational readiness, capacity, and effectiveness at a time when the demand for its services has never been higher."

"Integrated Coast Guard Systems is very pleased to be developing this new ship, along with our capable partners on the ICGS team," said Jamie Anton, executive vice president of ICGS.

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Northrop Grumman Ship Systems is leading the production effort, as a major partner in ICGS, a joint venture of Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin. Lockheed Martin will also receive work from this contract, primarily focused on the C4ISR capabilities.

The ship will be manufactured in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Fabrication for this first-in-class cutter will begin in September 2004, with the keel laying to follow, in April 2005. The anticipated date of delivery for the lead ship will be the second quarter of 2007.

The WMSL will be a 421-foot vessel with a 4,112-ton displacement at full load when delivered, will be powered by a twin screw combined diesel and gas turbine power propulsion plant designed to travel at maximum speed of 28 knots.

The cutter will include an aft launch and recovery area for two rigid hull inflatable boats, a flight deck to accommodate a range of rotary wing manned and unmanned aircraft and state of the art command and control electronics.

Maritime Security Cutter, Medium To Make Early Entrance Into Fleet

Ushering in another key milestone for the Deepwater Program, the Coast Guard and ICGS have announced that work will immediately commence on the new Maritime Security Cutter, Medium or WMSM (formerly the Offshore Patrol Cutter), the new highly capable, cutting-edge, medium-endurance cutter.

The action accelerates the effort to launch the WMSM by a full three-years compared to the Deepwater program's originally proposed schedule. (This first WMSM contract assigned to ICGS establishes the

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WMSL, WMSM *from page 2*

critical first-step engineering efforts that will occur over the next twelve months.)

The final mission requirements and preliminary design of the OPC will begin scoping as a result of this contract, with additional funding available for follow-on contracts.

Because of this accelerated contract, it is now expected that the first cutters could enter the Coast Guard fleet several years ahead of the original schedule, originally set for 2012.

"Northrop Grumman Ship Systems is proud to be a part of this challenging fleet modernization program, along with our capable partners on the Integrated Coast Guard Systems team," said Dr. Philip A. Dur, chairman of the board of ICGS and president of Northrop Grumman Ship Systems. "We are ready now to accelerate the design and production of this critical component of the Deepwater fleet. Northrop Grumman Ship Systems is committed to delivering both capability and durability to our customer, and we are anxious to get underway."

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The notional design of the OPC anticipates a 341-foot vessel with capabilities and equipment similar to the WMSL.

by Margaret Mitchell-Jones

Deepwater Goes 200-miles for 2004 Tom's Run

CDR Mike Anderson (on bike) on CDR Steve Nurre (on foot) represented Deepwater.

After taking last year off, the Integrated Deepwater System Program fielded a team to participate in the 2004 Tom's Run held June 4-5. The 200 mile trail run was held on the C&O Canal Tow Path and the Capital Crescent Trail despite the wet and cold weather, running and biking throughout the night. The precursor to the Tom's Run occurred in 1995 when CWO Tom Brooks coordinated a weekend bike trip down the C&O Canal for those he worked with in the Coast Guard's Office of Reserve Affairs. In 1999, after being diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) - commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, Brooks was medically retired from the Coast Guard and the Tom's Run was named in his honor.

The goal of the Tom's Run is for all teams to finish the event at 1100 Saturday morning. The challenge for each team is to determine the starting time based on each runner's pace for the 30 various distance legs of the race. In addition, coordination is necessary for the required bike escorts and the vehicle drivers as they make their way to the various exchange points. This year's run will be remembered as especially significant, as Tom Brooks passed away a few short weeks later.

CDR Mike Anderson, Skyler Anderson, Mike Watson, CDR John Wood, Paul Guinee, & CDR Steve Nurre after finishing the first segment of the Tom's Run

Members of the Deepwater team, in order of their participation, were: CDR Mike Anderson, Skyler Anderson (age 10), CDR John Wood, Mike Watson, CDR Steve Nurre, Paul Guinee, Gordon Peterson, ENS James Willingham, Stu Williams, LCDR Michael Rorstad, LCDR Michael Woolard, Maria Cooke, Andy Cooke, Rick Wharton, CDR Carl Frank, Kimberly Frank (age 16), CWO Barry Boyd, LCDR Andrea Palermo, LCDR Steve Pearson, LT Joe Dugan, and Rich Celatto.

— LCDR Andrea Palermo

Patrol Boats, *from page 1*

dre. A fourth, the Attu, is completing acceptance trials.

Officials with the Deepwater Program and ICGS say that the modernized 123s will provide substantially improved operational capabilities, but their return to service has been unexpectedly delayed by a number of persistent technical problems. During preliminary acceptance trials in February, the Matagorda proved that she is slightly faster, quieter, and agile following conversion from a 110-foot vessel. Small boat launching-and-recovery operations using the new seven-meter Short Range Prosecutor small boat should be significantly improved, and the cutter's suite for C4ISR promises to provide important new capabilities to enable a common operational picture through an integrated command-and-control and navigation system that includes installation of SIPRNET (Secure Internet Protocol Router Network).

The cutter, however, is not expected to return to service with District Seven until mid-September after the completion of a previously scheduled post-delivery maintenance availability.

The delay in the Matagorda's return to service is disappointing, program officials say. While it is not unusual for the lead ship in a class to generate a large number of discrepancies during a modernization or new-construction program, all significant or safety discrepancies must and will be corrected before the Coast Guard will accept delivery of the Matagorda and other 123s unconditionally.

March 5, 2004 marked an important milestone in the CGC Matagorda's 18-year service life when the cutter became the first modernized 123' Island Class Patrol Boat accepted by the Coast Guard under the Deepwater Program. US Coast Guard/PAC Dennis Hall

According to Rear Adm. Stillman, the conversion of the 110-foot boats proved to be more challenging technically than originally envisioned, including C4ISR upgrades. (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance). "The learning curve for these first-in-class conversions was steeper than we anticipated for what was, admittedly, an aggressive schedule," Stillman said, "and their modernization got off to a difficult start for a variety of reasons."

Of note, hull deterioration was greater than originally estimated, requiring more extensive repairs to, or replacement of, hull plating. The Matagorda, for example, had 35 percent of her steel hull replaced when it became evident that her hull condition was far worse than expected (instead of an anticipated 15 percent replacement).

The first three 123s' return to operational service following delivery also were delayed by integration of the C4ISR system and post-delivery maintenance requirements.

Following the Matagorda's delivery in March, Deepwater acquisition officials and their counterparts at ICGS reviewed the procedures and resources devoted to the 110 conversions, tests, trials, and deliveries to ensure smoother results with follow-on hulls. The quality of work and timeliness of conversions have gradually improved, but several technical difficulties persist—at a time when the Coast Guard desperately requires the converted "workhorse of the fleet" to meet increased operational demands associated with maritime homeland security and other missions.

The final number of 110- to 123-foot conversions to complete prior to the transition to the Maritime Patrol Coastal Cutter is being evaluated. A final decision is expected later this year.

by Gordon I. Peterson